

# Governor Markell Announces 2014 Team Excellence Awards

DOVER – Governor Jack Markell announced today that the *Improving Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities Workgroup*, a team of employees from seven agencies focused on increasing the hiring and retention of people with disabilities, is the 2014 recipient of the Governor's Team Excellence Award.

Due to the hard work, passion, and dedication of this workgroup, Delaware has become the model state for programs related to the employment of people with disabilities.

As chair of the National Governors Association (NGA) in 2013, Governor Markell established the initiative, "A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities." The initiative focused on the employment challenges that affect individuals with disabilities and the role state government and businesses can play in advancing gainful employment opportunities for these individuals in the competitive labor market. The workgroup was created to carry out the objectives of Governor Markell's initiative.

The group's work on this initiative involved the efforts of employees from seven different agencies: Department of Health and Social Services, Office of Management and Budget, Department of Safety and Homeland Security, Department of Labor, Department of Transportation, Office of the Public Defender, and the Delaware Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.

Since it was established, the workgroup has accomplished several important achievements. Over the past year, they have:

- Implemented new training and disability-related programs;
- Revised policies and procedures related to the Americans

with Disabilities Act and diversity awareness;

- Made significant improvements in the use of the State's Selective Placement program, which provides assistance to individuals with physical or mental impairments applying for state employment;
- Collaborated with the University of Delaware to conduct a statewide disability survey designed to provide insights into the State's culture and environment as it relates to employing people with disabilities; and
- Initiated a process that allows employees to self-disclose having a disability, which has had an immediate effect of doubling the number of employees disclosing this type of information over the past year.

The work of this group has not only made the NGA initiative a success but also continues to drive these employment efforts to the betterment of Delaware's citizens.

"Advancing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities is the right thing to do as a society. It's the smart thing for government to do, and it makes good business sense," said Governor Markell. "By providing every person with the best possible chance to achieve personal and professional success we will keep Delaware moving forward."

The Governor's Team Excellence Award is an annual award that encourages teamwork by recognizing groups of state employees for their efforts to produce tangible results and superior customer service through the use of continuous quality improvement tools. The teams recognized by this award demonstrate excellence in leadership, team dynamics, and communication.

In addition to the award recipients, four other teams were recognized as finalists:

**I-495 Emergency Bridge Repair Team – Department of Transportation**

On June 2, 2014, the I-495 bridge over the Christina River in Delaware was suddenly closed to traffic due to an emergency situation affecting the structural integrity of the bridge. This closure profoundly impacted the local and regional traffic as well as the economy as over 90,000 vehicles utilized the bridge daily. The project required considerable design and innovative construction techniques to repair the bridge and a 24/7 effort that involved the coordination of hundreds of personnel all pulling in one direction toward a common goal. The engineering and project management challenges were considerable and required creative thinking and a willingness to work around the clock until the problem was solved. This interdisciplinary team from DelDOT, consisting of professionals from Bridge Design, Bridge Inspection, Construction, Traffic, Materials and Research, Right-of-Way, Environmental Studies, and Maintenance and Operations, worked tirelessly and collaboratively to reopen the bridge well ahead of the estimated schedule. The innovative teamwork and effort put forth by this team allowed this vital link in our transportation infrastructure to safely be returned to full operation months ahead of schedule.

### **Delaware Outdoor Trail Team – Delaware Economic Development Office**

The Delaware Outdoor Trail was launched on Earth Day 2014 after a collaborative effort by DEDO's Delaware Tourism Office (DTO), the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), and DelDOT. Designed to suit travelers' preferences in outdoor adventure, the trail comprises 60 activities at 40 locations statewide, and features four primary types of activities: walking/hiking/running; biking; wildlife viewing; and watersports. Visitors can plan their adventure at Delaware Tourism's one-stop-shop for travelers, VisitDelaware.com. The project involved the coordination with hundreds of people at dozens of sites and countless hours of planning and marked the first time that DNREC, DelDOT, and DEDO collaborated to successfully execute a statewide tourism

initiative.

### **Mirror Lake Remediation and Restoration Team – Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control**

This team led an innovative project to clean up and restore Dover's Mirror Lake. With assistance from researchers at the University of Maryland, this team developed a remediation and restoration plan that involved the use of approximately 80 tons of an activated carbon product to the lake – the largest application of this approach in the nation to date. Since the project was completed last year, tests show a 60% reduction in contaminant levels in the lake. This project is a case study in applying innovative technology, creativity, and teamwork to complete a challenging project. Additional labor for this project was provided by the Department of Correction and hundreds of volunteers, including residents from a local shelter, resulting in taxpayer cost savings in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. In addition, this project provided the opportunity for senior DNREC staff to mentor and transfer knowledge to scientists and managers who will lead DNREC in the future. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the creative thinking, hard work, and full cooperation of each and every team member.

### **SCCC's Community Service Programs Team – Department of Correction**

Sussex County Community Correctional Center's (SCCC's) Community Service Programs Team is an experienced and versatile group of employees dedicated to making a difference in the community and providing options so the offenders they work with can become more productive individuals in society. They provide offenders from their Violation of Parole Units with a variety of training programs that highlight work ethic, character building, pride of accomplishments, and self-confidence. At the same time, they involve them in community service projects that benefit numerous state agencies, towns, churches, non-profit organizations, veterans, senior citizens,

recreation centers, schools and cemeteries. The team provides training and work opportunities in areas such as recycling, dune restoration, farming, horticulture, welding, construction, aquaculture, roadway beautification, and culinary arts. In addition to developing skills and self-confidence, the work of this team allows offenders to make connections within their communities. They demonstrate that they can make a positive impact on society and constructively influence their own communities. The dedication of SCCC's staff assures that these programs continue to impact lives by providing an environment for the offender population to receive training, acquire new skills, and develop positive social interests.



Pictured in photo, from left to right, are: Santino Ceccotti (Public Defender's Office), Barbara McCleary (OMB), Jamie Summerfield (OMB), Mark Monroe (DHSS), Tracey Connolly (OMB), Jane Hahn (OMB), Kayla Kosmalski, Wanda Pfieffer (OMB), Paul Beane (DeLARF), Denise Robbins (OMB), Denise Burke (DOL), Sandy Reyes (OMB), Cynthia Fairwell (DOL), Jill Fredel (DHSS), and John McNeal (DeLDOT). Not pictured is Kyle Hodges, Council for Persons with Disabilities,

and       Andrea       Guest,  
Department of Labor.